
Social Inclusion Working Group

22nd November 2006

Report of the Head of Performance Improvement

Involving Young People in the Social Inclusion Working Group

1. Summary

- 1.1 Currently there are no young people or youth forum directly involved in the Social Inclusion Working Group (SIWG). This paper explores options for effectively involving young people in the Group.

2. Background

- 2.1 The SIWG was established to consider issues of equality and social inclusion and to advise the Council's Executive on these issues accordingly. A key aim was to ensure that those sections of the community who experience disadvantage and exclusion should be able to contribute to the work of the Group and have a real say in its decisions. The Group has therefore invited the main community forums which represent each of the equality strands to send two representatives to sit on the Group. Where these forums do not currently exist the Group has undertaken to help establish them – for example the Disabled People's Forum held its inaugural meeting last month.
- 2.2 However the SIWG has recognised that young people are not currently represented in the Group. It has discussed how there is no longer a city-wide youth forum comparable to the other community forums represented on the group - but that this should not mean that steps shouldn't be taken to enhance the involvement of young people, only that more creative ways may need to be considered.

3. Current situation with involvement of young people

- 3.1 In 2005 a decision was taken to move away from a city wide Youth Forum to a broader strategy that increase young people's participation in involvement work. The current involvement strategy works to support and strengthen school councils and encourage their involvement in local community and Citywide issues. Running parallel to this are strategies to engage with harder to reach groups or to engage young people in more issue based approaches e.g. work with young people in care and care leavers, work with young people who have used mental health services, work about young people's views on substance misuse services, education and training provision 14-19. However these are quite specific to a particular service area or client group and so would not be able to speak on behalf of all young people. There are currently no systems that bring these groups together to discuss issues and concerns as a whole.

- 3.2 An important development in young people's services in recent years however has been the creation of a database of consultation with young people. This database records the consultation and involvement activity that all young people's services from all sectors have undertaken with young people, including the method used, the questions asked, the views of young people as expressed through the consultation and the outcome of the consultation (ie how services have therefore changed). This database means that there is shared understanding across all agencies working with young people in the city) of the key issues of importance to young people what they feel needs to be improved. Common themes raised in recent consultations include access to and cost of public transport, leisure activities and community safety issues.
- 3.3 So while we have a good level of consultation and involvement work going on with young people and a good understanding of the issues of concern to them there is a problem with ensuring there can be effective direct involvement of young people on the SIWG on the same basis as the other equality strands represented on the Group. Currently there is no city-wide forum that could send representatives and ensure that young people generally are kept informed about the Group's work and to seek views.
- 3.4 It may be possible to find a couple of young people who would like to be involved in the Group but they would only be able to speak for themselves and not for the wider community of young people. They would also need considerable support if they were to be able to participate in meetings on an equal basis. For example they would need a specific briefing paper for young people prior to the meeting, a pre meeting briefing session and a mentor in the meeting itself.

4. Options

- 4.1 Members of the Group are asked to consider the following options for addressing the involvement of young people.
- A Officers from the Youth Service to attend the meetings to advocate on behalf of young people. Their role would only be to articulate the views of young people as have already been expressed through consultation and involvement activity, as recorded on the consultation database.
- B Include issues that are important to young people are placed on the forward plan and with the advice and support of the Youth Service relevant young people are invited to attend those particular meetings.
- C Hold a once-yearly social inclusion event for young people – a Social Inclusion Youth Forum. This could ascertain the views of young people on a number of social inclusion and equality issues and may lead to the identification of two younger people interested in attending the SIWG on a regular basis. Representation on this would be drawn from within the BME forum and Disabled People's Forum as well as other appropriate groups across the City.
- D The relevant Community Forums involved in the SIWG work to better involve young people in their activities and by so doing identify a young person who would be interested in representing the views of young people from that

community at the SIWG. These young people's representatives would be offered an extra place on the SIWG.

E A combination of options A-D above.

5. Analysis

- 5.1 Option A enables the views of young people to be fed into the SIWG. The views expressed have already been articulated by young people and as such they would be accountable and representative. However without young people present to listen to and participate in the discussions it is not possible to respond to the intricacies of a discussion or express a clear view on the detail of any recommendation or report.
- 5.2 Option B on the other hand allows for the direct involvement of young people in discussions that have already been highlighted as important to the wider community of young people. The young people attending may have a particular interest in the topic – for example if it is an issue about the harassment of BME groups, the experiences and views of young BME people may be very helpful. The meetings would have to be made accessible and inclusive to them if this were to be effective and meaningful involvement. The young people attending would not however be representatives of young people generally and would only be speaking as individuals. This would require additional officer time from the youth service and other partners in identifying, recruiting and supporting young people who would be participating in these meetings.
- 5.3 Option C allows for direct discussion with more young people on a range of social inclusion and equality issues. The discussions could be quite detailed, cover a range of issues at each event and involve a wide range of partner agencies to listen to the views expressed. The discussion would however be separate from the main business of the Group and as such the young people involved would not have any direct influence over (or knowledge of) the decisions taken by the Group as these will take place elsewhere at another time. Forums such as this can also take considerable officer time to organise and require significant resources. Any proposal to support this option would need to be developed in detail and more fully costed before final approval could be given.
- 5.4 Option D would allow for regular representation of young people's views through existing forums and would ensure that young people's views on a variety of social inclusion issues are addressed. However it may take some time for the community forums to identify young people who could take part on the group.
- 5.5 Option E suggests that a combination of each of the above options is explored. Doing so means that the specific deficiencies of any particular option can be addressed and complemented by another option. It would mean that the views of young people as expressed in previous consultation and involvement activity is not lost and is fed into relevant discussions on a regular basis. It would also mean that younger people can be involved directly in specific issues relevant to them and that the wider community of younger people also have an opportunity to feed into the Group and social inclusion issues.

6. Corporate Objectives

6.1 The emphasis of the SIWG is to improve the effectiveness of the organisation in meeting the diverse needs of its customers. The applications for funding from the community forums participating in the Group are designed to enhance the wider community's engagement. Hence the main corporate priority that this paper address is:

- Improve our focus on the needs of customers and residents in designing and providing services.

7. Implications

Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications associated with options A or B. The financial implications for option C would depend greatly on the nature of the event to be held and which other partner agencies were to be involved. If supported option C would need to be fully costed and a detailed application for funding to be made to the Equalities Team (the views of the SIWG would be sought on the appropriateness of the application).

Equalities Implications

7.2 The report addresses the effective involvement of young people in the SIWG. This would support the Council's work to implement the Equality Standard for Local Government and the embedding of the Council's Equality Strategy - "Pride in our Communities".

8. Risk Management

8.1 In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy. There are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

9. Recommendations

9.1 Members are asked to:

9.2 Support Option E to support the involvement of young people in the SIWG.

Reason: Option E provides for the most effective and comprehensive involvement of young people given the current overall approach to young people's involvement in the city.

9.3 Request that officers develop detailed plans for a Social Inclusion Youth Forum in partnership with other relevant agencies and to discuss these plans at a future meeting.

Reason: To develop a more comprehensive and inclusive means of involving young people in issues of social inclusion and equality.

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) *List information for all*
Implication ie Financial *Implication ie Legal*
Name *Name*
Title *Title*
Tel No. *Tel No.*

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report